

REMARKS**Response to Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103**

Claims 1, 7-10, 15, 16, 19, 71, 74, 76, 83-85, 87, 89 and 97-100 were rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Miller et al. (U.S. Pat. 6,758,824) in view of Anderson et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,086,543).

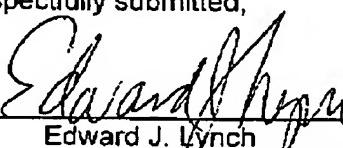
Claims 77-82 and 90-95 were rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Miller et al. ('824) in view of Anderson et al. ('543) and further in view of Majlessi (U.S. Pat. No. 5,871,454).

Applicants believe that the combined teachings of Miller et al. in view of Anderson and Miller et al. in view of Anderson and Majlessi fail to teach the features of the rejected claims. Specifically, applicants have amended the independent claims to clarify the orientation of the outer tissue cutting edge and the intersection between the longitudinal slot and the trailing portion of the outer tissue cutting edge. The combined teachings of the cited references fail to teach all the claimed features and therefore fail to support the rejections.

Conclusions

Applicants believe that the pending claims as amended above are directed to patentable subject matter. Further consideration pursuant to the concurrently filed RCE and an early allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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